appropriate for historic buildings and should therefore not be considered when a lasting and durable repointing job is desired.

Summary

For the Owner/Administrator: The owner or administrator of an historic building must constantly remember that repointing is likely to be a lengthy and expensive process. The owner will need to allow adequate time for evaluation by a qualified preservationist, for preparation of plans and specifications for the work, and for a lengthy work period with scaffolding in place. Schedules for both repointing work and other activities will thus require careful coordination to avoid unanticipated conflicts. The owner must avoid the tendency to rush the work or economize if the building is to retain its visual integrity and the job is to be durable.

For the Architect/Consultant: The architect/consultant must assist the owner in planning for logistical problems relating to research and construction. The consultant must also realize that older buildings have special problems usually not encountered with modern building materials or techniques of construction. Therefore, extra research will be required, and nonstandard materials and procedures will need to be used in evaluating the work of potential contractors to ensure that they are qualified to work on projects of the type anticipated. The consultant must also be prepared to spend more time than is customary in modern construction to inspect the work.

For the Contractor/Craftsman: The contractor or craftsman must keep in mind that a repointing project for a historic building will be slower and more expensive per unit cost than work on a modern building. The contractor must understand the reasons for these special requirements, and must convey them to the workers at all levels. Understanding the nature of the project and the potential problems will not only allow the contractor to submit a more accurate bid, but will also provide for the use of nonstandard methods in performing work.

Conclusion

First and foremost, a good repointing job is meant to last, often in the range of 50–100 years. Shortcuts and poor craftsmanship not only result in a job that looks bad, but also in one that will require future repointing more frequently than if the job had been done correctly in the first place. The mortar joint in a historic brick building has often been called the wall's "first line of defense." Good repointing practices guarantee the long life of the mortar joint, the wall, and the historic structure. However, while careful preservation, restoration, and maintenance will guarantee the long life of the freshly repointed mortar joints, it is important to remember that these mortar joints will probably require repointing some time in the future. It is the nature of mortar joints to deteriorate. Nevertheless, if the historic mortar joints proved durable for many years, then careful repointing should have an equally long life, ultimately contributing to the preservation of the historic brick building.

This brief was first written by Robert C. Mack, AIA, in 1976. It has been revised and updated in 1980 by Robert C. Mack, de Teel Patterson Tiller, Architectural Historian, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service (HCRS), Department of the Interior; and James S. Askins, Preservation Craftsman, National Park Service, Department of the Interior. Other HCRS staff members who contributed materially to the development of this revised brief are Kay D. Weeks, Technical Writer-Editor, and James A. Caufield, Historical Architect.

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Preservation Briefs 2 has been developed under the technical editorship of Lee H. Nelson, AIA, Chief, Technical Preservation Services, Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C. 20243. Comments on the usefulness of this information are welcome and can be sent to Mr. Nelson at the above address.

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